

**Coming of Age: A Screenplay and Explanation**

**An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)**

**by**

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To Daddy, who taught me to believe in the magic,  
and  
The girlz n the car, who taught me to believe in myself.

## **Abstract**

American films are almost exclusively about men. The tale of a young man's journey to adulthood is a common theme in movies. Such coming of age films focus on the sexual or intellectual awakening of a boy or his difficult transition into the adult world. But there are few, if any, attempts to convey the difficulties young women face during the same time in their lives. With this theme in mind, the screenplay was written. Before the actual writing, though, a process of investigation was needed to learn the correct format and specifications for a film script. Once these were determined, the battle with writer's block was the only obstacle left to conquer. A careful review of why the script was written was the best way to handle such a problem: the screenplay was my way of showing the humor, strength and courage it takes for anyone, but especially young women, to answer the question, "What do I want to be when I grow up?"

"All good writing is *swimming under water* and holding your breath."

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Screenplay writing, I would learn while writing mine, is not merely typing names, points of view and pithy dialogue. If it were, writing Near Wild Heaven would have been easy. Before I began the project, I had assumed it would be simple. A few nifty camera directions, some snappy lines and I would be Ben Hecht. Around page 53, I realized that wasn't true. No, I was in for much more trouble than I had expected--much, much more.

As with any type of writing, I had to begin by doing research. It seemed at first that every failed screenwriter had written a book about how to write a screenplay. It also seemed as though I read through almost all of these. Some of them worked and, of course, some of them didn't.

Before I could begin the actual writing of the screenplay, I had to know exactly how it is done. More than just expert opinions and advice, I needed a manual of some kind. I needed a book which said this is how your page *must* look and this is what your margins *must* be. The answer to all my questions, and a few of my prayers, was The Art of Screenwriting.

This book taught me how a screenplay looks. In simple terms it explained the appropriate margins necessary for a script. Camera directions and stage directions are typed all the way across the page. Dialogue is typed in a three inch margin in the center of the page, with the character's name just above it. Stage directions on how to say the lines are to be typed beneath the character's name and to the left. Double space between speeches and directions but everything is single spaced.(Packard, 116) These were specific rules which I would need to learn and obey.

Once I knew the format, then, the writing would be simple. Wrong again, as I returned to my manual for another lesson. This time I needed to know camera angles and technical directions for the story. The script is, after all, a blueprint for film. Without indications on how a scene should *look*, the visual element essential to filmmaking would be lost. Having never made a major motion picture, though, I was not familiar with all of the shots and effects at my disposal. So I learned them one night.

Lest anyone consider me a budding Eisenstein, let me explain. The Art of Screenwriting provided a glossary of technical terms. From this, I found out what is meant by INT and EXT and the difference between a Dolly Shot and a Traveling Shot. In only three short pages, I learned every possible shot I could ever want to use.

So now I knew the screenplay format and the technical terms I would need. What else would I need to know before I tried to write a

script? Consulting my manual, for yet another time, I discovered the most important thing a screenwriter needs to know.

All screenplays (all of them) are to be 120 pages, or as close to that as possible. "The script length of 120 pages equals a two hour full-length feature film...the running time of each screenplay page is approximately equal to one minute of film time."(Packard, 117) An entire industry is based on the 120 page limit and so it's in the best interest of all screenwriters, particularly the beginners, to adhere to it. I finished Near Wild Heaven four pages over the limit. Since it was a first effort, and having no idea which four pages I would cut, I decided those four pages weren't a problem.

I found some support for this idea in the other book which I frequently consulted, Alternative Scriptwriting. The book never endorsed ignoring the established rules. Rather it encouraged an individualistic attitude toward the writing. "The perspective you choose, along with everything else, is up to you."(Rush, 196) Since Near Wild Heaven is such a personal story, I couldn't help but approach writing it in a manner that was entirely my own, obeying only the rules necessary to make it work as a film.

Along with reinforcing the need for a personal creative voice, Alternative Scriptwriting also gave me a way to focus the story. Even though I knew *how* to write the script, I still needed to define *why* I was writing it. The story had to have a point. The best way to ensure that I was saying exactly what I wanted to say was to break down the

story into acts.

"A 120-page feature script is divided into three acts. The first act is roughly 30 pages long, the second is 60, and the third is 30...The first act is concerned with setup, the second act with confrontation, and the third act with resolution."(Dancyger, 17)

As in other types of writing, a screenplay has to have exposition, rising action, a climax and a denouement. The story could not just be a rambling on the nature of the world, as mine was at the beginning. I needed to construct the story in a more definite and refined way. Using a three act structure, I could better determine the point I wanted to make in each one. There could also be a kind of symmetry between the acts which would reinforce the central theme.

The first act of Near Wild Heaven lasts longer than the usual 30 pages but does, indeed, deal with setup. In this opening act, the reader meets the characters and finds out the general plot of the film. The relationships established within these pages will play out throughout the remainder of the script.

During the second act, the characters confront many different things. Michelle endures the ongoing turmoil of leaving her friends and starting a career she's not at all certain she can handle. Lori must battle her doubts about her career choice as well, coupled with the a sense of loss about an old boyfriend and leaving the only home she's ever known. For Kate, the clash occurs because she's trying to retain the image of complete control over herself and her life despite the

fact that she is just as confused as everyone else. Maggie refuses to acknowledge that she truly fears the lack of direction in her life. Throughout these personal confrontations, the women must also confront one another. Their friendships are strained on the trip but ultimately strengthened, which is also the effect the trip has on them as individuals.

The final act includes the various goodbyes as each woman begins her life. The confrontations, both inner and interpersonal, are settled in one way or another. Not all the questions are answered and not all the differences are agreed upon. But each woman is better able to face her life, and herself, as a result of the relationships within the group.

Keeping with the structure, I tried to maintain continuity between the acts. Each of the first two acts ends with the group together, celebrating. Act One ends after Melinda's wedding, when they have all said goodbye to their newly married friend. Act Two ends in a bar in Texas, where the women are once again gathered together for one last time, drinking, singing, and ignoring the impending sadness they will feel.

Act Three has all of the tears but none of the celebration found at the conclusion of the previous acts. An aura of uncertainty hangs over each of these goodbyes. The new lives are indefinite, but the partings are not. These are, each of them knows, final somehow. It will never be as it was. The film ends on quite an open-ended note.



But I feel it is a resolution nonetheless, with matters settled, arguments resolved, forgiveness shared and love declared.

Once I had decided upon my acts and mastered all of the techniques, I thought I would then have no more problems while writing the screenplay. Yet again, I found myself to be all wrong. Although there were no more mechanical barriers to my writing, I stumbled upon that dreaded, age-old scourge--Writer's Block.

The Art of Screenwriting helped me through this crisis as well. Before beginning a project, a writer needs to reach a level of inner relaxation. In turning off the critical mind, the writer can delve into the imagination tucked into the unconscious. (Packard, 82) This is the secret of Ingmar Bergman, so I would consider it reliable advice.

The blocks seemed to come when I needed a transition--I had two scenes that worked, but no decent way to connect them. This can be terribly frustrating and lead to frightening self-doubt and self-loathing, both detrimental to writers. So, taking the advice of Bergman, I would leave the script. It would be all right without me for a little while. I would certainly be all right without it at such times.

Not thinking about which scene I needed became the best way to write the scene. Cliche or not, inspiration often hit me while I was in class, driving my car or trying to sleep. When I would let it, the script seemed to write itself.

Another way to avoid writer's block involved examining again why I was writing the script. If my purpose had gotten muddled in

the mechanics or the word processing, the writing became equally muddled. Defining my reasons for writing became the best way to continue.

The primary reason for writing Near Wild Heaven was simple. I had not seen anything like it. Despite spending most of my life watching films, I hadn't seen a depiction of women like this. Film has always been, and remains, a male dominated industry. Men are not often privy to the intricacies of women's relationships. So they cannot be expected to portray them accurately. At best, their attempts are a man's idea of what women are like in friendships.

This is the case in the films of John Hughes. Hughes' films of the mid-80s tried to deal with a young woman's coming of age. While these films, particularly Sixteen Candles and Pretty in Pink, are funny and often sensitive treatments of their protagonist, played by Molly Ringwald, they are inconsistent with the experiences of most young women.

In both films, Ringwald's characters are basically loners. In Sixteen Candles, she has only limited interaction with one other girlfriend. The rest of her time is spent trying to meet the ideal man and befriending the geek. She is a nice suburban high school girl in Hughes' WASP wonderland. But she does not ring true.

Teenage girls surround themselves with a lot of friends. Whether it is merely a social clique or a group of sincere intimates, this group acts as a buffer to the complexities of the outside world.

Here she can find a haven from the many uncertainties which confront her. "The center of a little girl's social life is her best friend...For grown women too, the essence of friendship is talk, telling each other what they're thinking and feeling, and what happened that day:"(Tannen, 80) With such friends, she finds support from others who are experiencing the same problems.

Similarly, the Ringwald character of Pretty in Pink does not seem based in any reality. She is a misfit and her only friend, a teenage boy, is in love with her. Like the character in Sixteen Candles, she is obsessed with making the man of her dreams fall in love with her. Her sole female intimate is much older than she, and functions more as a surrogate mother than comrade. She has no girlfriends with which to share her heartbreak, frustration and fear. No wonder she's portrayed as unhappy.

However inconsistent these characters are with reality, they are at least attempts to deal with the world of young women. The majority of films concentrate on the coming of age of men. In these films, women are, at best, peripheral figures.

Coming of age films can be broken down into three distinct sub-groups. These are the sexual awakening, the intellectual awakening and the transitional film. Often films of this kind will be a combination of all three, but there is always one aspect which predominates.

The most common type of coming of age film is the sexual

awakening film. With titles such as Mischief, Losin' It, and Porky's, these films center on a young man's attempt to either lose his virginity or "score" the girl of his dreams. In such films, women are objects to be conquered and won. They are not, however, individual people with their own ideas and dreams. Instead of being fleshed out characters, the women are merely flesh.

In recent years, there have been a number of films which deal with a young woman's sexuality. However, Dirty Dancing and Mermaids hardly qualify as rich explorations of the topic. Like the Hughes' films, they are a man's attempt to capture something they are always outside of.

Films which center on intellectual awakening are also told from the viewpoint of men. No surprise, considering the most common settings for these films are academia or war, long time bastions of masculinity. Recent examples, such as Dead Poet's Society and Platoon, depict the need for young men to determine for themselves what is right and best for them. But why are women not forced to make this decision?

The final type of coming of age film is the transitional film. This is the story about young people who are, for the first time, confronting reality. Perhaps the best example of this type is Barry Levinson's Diner. Drawing on his own experiences, Levinson creates characters who are at crossroads in their lives and find solace with one another at their local diner. It is a vibrant study of friendship, full of wit and

warmth. But it is about men. The women in the film are wives, mothers, and girlfriends. They are incidental. They can make lunch and are forced to take football quizzes to prove their worthiness to the men. This is similar to how the women in George Lucas' American Graffiti, another transitional film, are treated. They exist only in relation to the men in their lives.

An attempt to bring women into this transition is found in Joel Shumacher's St. Elmo's Fire. Though none of the characters are particularly well-defined, the women are especially slighted. Each of the main female characters acts as a counterpart to one of the men. The men are the focus of the film, confronting issues of fatherhood, business success and personal growth. The women are little more than catalysts for their struggles.

With this as background, I began to write. The story would be about a woman's struggle to find out who she is, what she must be. This is an old story, told many times in the heroic quests of mythology. Traditionally, the young man leaves his home on a journey. When he returns, after encountering many foes and dangers, he is a Man. This is consistent with the initiation rituals of primitive cultures in which boys leave their homes, go to a sacred place with the elders of the tribe for an initiation and then can be considered men. But there is no counterpart for women. For women, then, a "new myth"(Campbell, 9) is needed.

The best way to create and perpetuate a myth today, I reasoned,

was through film. We see the world through the eyes of our filmmakers. Our vision of what is strong or beautiful or touching comes from what we have seen on the screen. To effect people, to move them, has become the duty of the cinema moreso than the Bible or Homer.

Not that Near Wild Heaven will change the way the world. The politics of the film industry are hard on women. Despite an increasing number of women producing and directing films, Hollywood remains an exclusive men's club. Realistically, this won't change for a long time. But reality, as Maggie, would say, is overrated.

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NEAR WILD HEAVEN

BY

TRICIA E. SUTT



INT In CLOSE UP, a woman's hand slaps a beeping alarm. The camera PULLS BACK to reveal, MAGGIE lost in a tangle of blankets and clothes. She rolls over, stares at the ceiling and sighs. She is 22 with short hair that has not yet determined what color it wants to be after the numerous colorings. Her eyes are a dark green, which LORI refers to as "mood eyes" because of their tendency to change shade. The quintessential dreamer, what MAGGIE lacks in practicality, she more than makes up for in spirit. As she watches the ceiling, MUSIC begins, "Near Wild Heaven."

INT MICHELLE is looking into her medicine chest mirror. She brushes her wet hair from her eyes, wiping day-old make up from her eyes. Like MAGGIE, she is 22. Her long brown hair seems always to be in her way. But her efforts to get it out of her face lack all pretension...MICHELLE does not try to be seductive, just comfortable. Her large brown eyes seem always to be in a state of surprise at her actions or someone else's. But her understanding of these actions, as well as her own reaction to them would seem to make her an ideal psychologist as she begins working at a psychiatric clinic in Arizona.

INT KATE stands in her kitchen, pouring coffee into a mug. She looks at her watch as she waits for the toast to pop up. At 23, she is oldest of the four. Blonde and blue-eyed, she is a little too much the American Golden Girl. KATE has never had a bad haircut or a bad grade in her life. Her alleged perfection is a source of jealousy as well as pride for the rest in the group. Following graduation, she decided she would teach in Asia as part of an exchange program

INT LORI throws clothes into a suitcase. She holds up some shirts, then throws them aside. Looking at her watch, she turns her attention to clothes on the floor. She is the youngest of the four, turning 21 only the previous fall. But she is the most logical and clear thinking of the group. She takes her fair share of abuse for that, as well as her desire to be a lawyer. Her hair is a no nonsense blunt cut that, while being a natural dark blonde, is growing out a shade darker due to MAGGIE'S latest coloring suggestion. This makes her a "Madonna in reverse," according to MICHELLE. Her eyes are a soft blue with an everpresent snide twinkle.

EXT MAGGIE is in front of her car, which is parked in front of a slightly run-down house. It is in a residential area which once would have been the height of suburban living but now screams college. Her car is less than new white Escort, a little rusty and with just a few scratches. She is putting a suitcase in the trunk in preparation for the trip. After stopping in Chicago for a friend's wedding, the four women will continue west as each one heads to her life following their graduation from a Midwestern university. It is early June, full of humidity and sunlight. MAGGIE is cleaning the windshield when LORI approaches from MAGGIE'S POV.

LORI

Eating a candybar.

Is he ready for this?

MAGGIE

Slapping the car's hood.

Well, the Little Bastard's been through worse...I guess.

Looking at LORI'S luggage.

What's that?

LORI

My stuff. I didn't know what I'd need. We've never done an extended road trip before, let alone cross country. I thought I should be prepared for any emergency.

MAGGIE

Walking over to the bags

Any emergency? What all do you have in these?

LORI

In this one

She points to the largest bag

are clothes I might need. I thought I should have something for all kinds of weather. This one

She points to a smaller bag

is for in the car. Deodorant , toothbrush, aspirin and mascara. Plus food--

Looks through the bag

Ding Dongs, Twinkies, some gum...and a flashlight. In case I need the Ding Dongs and it's dark.

She smiles at MAGGIE

MAGGIE

Pretty much got every possible emergency covered, Lor. Did you bring plenty of quarters, too?

LORI jingles her purse. MAGGIE climbs onto the hood of the car.

Have you talked to Michelle? I told her to be here at 10. It is now

Looks at watch.

10:13, no, 14. So, per usual, Michelle is late.

LORI

She'll be here. She hasn't been on time once since I've known her. Remember she showed up at graduation right before they called her name. Time is not an easy concept for Michelle.

MAGGIE

I feel sorry for any of her patients. "I'm sorry, Mr. Smith, but Dr. D'Angelo can't help you through your suicidal despondency right now. But we expect her back at any moment." Jesus, she'll make a mint charging by the hour.

LORI

Sitting next to MAGGIE on the car

What time did you tell Kate we'd pick her up?

MAGGIE

I wanted to say 10:15. But I knew Shel would be late

Looks at LORI

so I said between 10:30 and 11. I just want to get be in Chicago early eveningish.

LORI

Is that a word? Eveningish?

MAGGIE

Are you questioning my B.S. in English?

LORI

Oh, I would never question your b.s. I just didn't think "eveningish" was a word.

MAGGIE

You're probably right.

MICHELLE

Off camera, but enters the scene as she talks, we see her from the POV of those on the car.

I am *so* sorry! Everyone called me.  
And I couldn't find my shoes. Then I  
couldn't find my keys.

MAGGIE & LORI

Together.

How unusual.

MICHELLE

Resting on the car, out of breath.

So are we ready? Where's Kate?

MAGGIE  
I have to pick her up.

Jumps off car.

Saddle up, girls.

MAGGIE lifts the Escort's hatchback, putting LORI and MICHELLE'S luggage in the trunk. LORI hugs the smaller bag of "emergency" supplies to herself. The three of them walk toward the front of the car.

LORI  
Shotgun!

She turns to MICHELLE

You know I hate to ride in the  
backseat.

To MAGGIE

MICHELLE

Then we better damn well make sure we  
don't get arrested on this trip.

MAGGIE and MICHELLE laugh.

LORI  
What? I didn't get it.

MAGGIE rolls her eyes at her as she gets into the car

What was that look for? Ugh! I don't get it.  
I just don't get it.

INT The three women are in the car, the windows are down as LORI plays with the radio.

EXT The car glides down a residential street. We see MICHELLE waving to some people in their yard.

EXT The Escort pulls in front of an old apartment building. KATE is seated on a suitcase, under a tree. MAGGIE pulls the car up onto the sidewalk. KATE looks at her watch.

KATE

Good thing it's a nice day. I called Mel to tell her we got a late start.

She looks at MICHELLE in the backseat.

MICHELLE

I couldn't find my keys. Jeesh!

LORI

Getting out of the car

Let's get this in the trunk.

She lifts the suitcase

You want shotgun?

KATE

No, you can man the radio for a while.

MAGGIE

Getting out to unlock the trunk.

And she's so good at it. It took us, what, five minutes to get here. I think we heard one song all the way through.

MICHELLE

Looking out the window at the other three at the trunk.

Not even a good song.

LORI

Getting back into the car, answering defensively.

I like ABBA.

She reaches into her bag.

Anybody want a Ding Dong?

MICHELLE

I could eat. You got any Twinkies?

LORI

Feeling around in the bag.

Voila!

Hands the Twinkie to her friend.

EXT MAGGIE closes the trunk. She and KATE now get into the car. Starting the Escort, MAGGIE pulls away down the cozy street.

EXT The car is on a wide country road. There is no traffic and the sun is shining.

INT MAGGIE adjusts the rearview mirror. LORI plays with the radio. MICHELLE and KATE stare out their windows. The chorus of "Roadhouse Blues" comes from the radio, followed almost immediately by the strains of "Someday."

MAGGIE

To LORI

That's great, leave it ...

LORI

I'm sorry. Did you want that song? Damn, now I can't find it.

MAGGIE

Turn the dial thingie toward me.

She taps her fingers on the steering wheel, anticipating the beat.

More.

LORI

To MAGGIE

It's gone. I'll just leave it here. Is this OK with every one?

MICHELLE and KATE give faint affirmatives.

MAGGIE

You turned off The Doors for Mariah Carey?

I cannot drive to Mariah Carey.

LORI

Why not? I do.

MAGGIE

You can drive to Mariah Carey and Micheal Bolton. I've seen you go ballistic when a Barry Manilow song comes on. But these are not driving songs.

LORI

How can they not be "driving songs," if I can drive to them.

MAGGIE

They have guitars. "Driving songs" have a lot of guitar and really loud drums. As soon as you hear it, you accelerate.

KATE

Leaning forward.

She's given this a lot of thought, Lor. You could be in for it.

MAGGIE

Explaining to everyone, but no one in particular.

You know how you just hear a song and you want to drive forever. You roll down the windows and the whole world just disappears. For three minutes nothing else matters. It's just you and the highway.

KATE

Rolling her eyes at MICHELLE, saying to MAGGIE

Thank you, Jack Kerouac. Do you think we could discuss something normal now?

MICHELLE

You know how she gets. Just let her get it out of her system before the wedding. God knows, Melinda shouldn't have to listen to her 80 bejillion theories of life...She'll be cranky enough about the wedding stuff.

MAGGIE

Melinda never could stand my tangents. But you guys were always *so* understanding.

The four women laugh as MAGGIE turns the car on to an exit. They drive to the first sign with a "food" arrow. They continue down the road looking for a place to buy gas and eat lunch. MICHELLE sees a "Diner" sign and they pull into the parking lot.

EXT LORI and KATE get out of the car, kicking their legs to stretch. MAGGIE and MICHELLE remain in the Escort.

LORI

Dabbing at the sweat on her face and trying to stretch her legs.

God, it got hot. How long have we been in the car anyway?

KATE

About an hour.

LORI

Oh...Well it seemed a lot longer. The humidity and all.

MAGGIE

OK, I'm gonna get gas. You kids go in and find a table.

Looking around the nearly empty parking lot.

Although that shouldn't be too hard to do.

MAGGIE pulls to the front of the restaurant. KATE and LORI get out, MICHELLE climbs into the front seat. MAGGIE looks at her quizzically. MAGGIE drives over to the gas pump.

INT

MICHELLE

Explaining

I thought I could run the money in for you, that would save us a few minutes.

MAGGIE

Smiling

Thanks, Shel. But it's not that big a deal, I



could do it. Shel, we're not running late.

MICHELLE

I just feel like I made us get a late start.  
Sometimes I just wonder what's wrong with  
me.

She starts to cry.

INT MAGGIE looks at MICHELLE, sighs, then looks out the window.

MICHELLE

I'm so fucking ir--irresponsible. I can't even  
get ready for my best friend's wedding on  
time.

She pounds her fist into the seat.

They disconnected my phone because I  
forgot to pay the bill.

Turns to MAGGIE.

I forgot... FORGOT...It's not like I didn't  
have the money. For once I did.

MAGGIE

Takes her friend's hand

I know, honey. But it's really...

MICHELLE cuts her off

MICHELLE

Her voice rising, choking on the tears.

What am I doing? Who am I kidding? I'm  
going to be a psychologist? Right! Get real!  
How am *I* going to help people?  
I'm hopeless. Absolutely fucking hopeless.

MAGGIE

Are you through? Has the self-pity portion  
of the show concluded?

She smiles at MICHELLE.

Shel, reality is overrated. So what if you're  
a little late. I don't think that ten minutes is  
cause for a complete breakdown here.  
You're not irresponsible, Shelly. You're  
scared.

Exhales, looks around.

And who the hell isn't.

She reaches into her purse and begins to look around the gas station.

Now, go pay someone for the gas.

Both women start to look around for a place to pay. Unexpectedly, an attendant walks over to the car. He is about their age, with curly hair and a soft voice. His name patch says "NICK."

NICK

How may I help you ladies today?

MICHELLE is obviously smitten by him. MAGGIE looks at her and mouths "no."

MAGGIE

Could you fill it up please.

NICK

Would you like the oil checked or anything?  
I'd be happy to it.

MAGGIE

No, just fill it up, thanks.

EXT NICK moves to the back of the car and begins to pump the gas.

INT MICHELLE starts giggling and pulls down the sunvisor to look at herself, and NICK, in the mirror.

MICHELLE

It would figure. He's the only boy we'll see all day, and I've just finished bawling. So I look like a monster. Cute boy and I'm scaring him.

MAGGIE

Shel, he's pumping gas. I don't think he's used to overtly glamorous women around here. And like you'll see him again. But, be sure to give him a big tip, will ya.

She starts rummaging through her purse. There is the rattle of change as she searches for money.

MICHELLE

Here. Give him this.

She hands MAGGIE a five dollar bill.

MAGGIE

Five dollars! You're giving him five dollars because he's cute? That's ridiculous!

EXT NICK approaches the front of the car on the passenger side. As he bends to ask if they need anything else, he hears MICHELLE'S reasoning to MAGGIE.

MICHELLE

He's so damn hot. I figure he should buy himself a drink, or three, so he can cool off.

NICK

A CLOSE UP of NICK'S face red, from the sun and embarrassment.

Do you ladies need anything else?

MICHELLE

Sinking into her seat and staring at MAGGIE in disbelief. MAGGIE is stifling all out hysterics by this time.

I'm going to die. Could this be worse. I can't believe it. I cannot believe this. I am a dumbass.

MAGGIE

Giggling.

No, thanks, Nick. Michelle, will you give him this please.

She hands her the money, waving MICHELLE'S tip. He smiles almost apologetically at the two of them as they pull away.

EXT MAGGIE and MICHELLE get out the car, and fall into one another in hopeless laughter. They begin to walk into the diner.

INT LORI'S POV as she spots the two of them walking into the diner and waves to them. A waitress and a few customers turn to look.

MAGGIE

In CLOSE UP as she smiles feebly and says to MICHELLE.

Like we didn't notice them.

INT MAGGIE and MICHELLE continue toward the table. KATE and LORI have ordered coffee which is already on the table by this time. When they reach the booth, MAGGIE sits by KATE, facing the kitchen, MICHELLE by LORI, facing a wall. There is a moment of hesitation while MAGGIE and MICHELLE wait for the other to mention the NICK episode.

MICHELLE

I just embarrassed myself more than I have ever embarrassed myself before. You will not *believe* how stupid I am.

LORI

Smiling.

Well...I don't know about that. Maggie, can you hand me the sugar?

MICHELLE

The cutest boy of all time pumped our gas.

MAGGIE

He was not the cutest boy of all time.

She picks up a menu and studies it intently.

MICHELLE

He was definite All Star material .

MAGGIE

Throws down menu.

Oh, for God's sake, he was not. Water boy, maybe, but not on the team.

MICHELLE

OK--It's just a shame the two of you won't get to see him.

MAGGIE

Smiles at MICHELLE as she notices NICK walking toward their table, tying an apron behind his back.

No...They can decide for themselves now.

MICHELLE turns quickly to see NICK approaching the table. She turns around and stares down at the table. She begins to mumble to herself in a singsong voice. MAGGIE and KATE begin to laugh, LORI is still looking at the menu.

MICHELLE

This is the worst. I'm a dumbass. Stupid. Stupid. Stupid. I couldn't be a bigger dumbass if I tried.

NICK

Good morning, ladies. Are you ready to or...

Noticing MICHELLE.

Well, hello there.

MICHELLE

Barely audible.

Hi.

KATE

No, we aren't ready to order yet.

NICK

I'll just come back in a second when you're ready then, OK?

He pats MICHELLE lightly on the shoulder

LORI

Looking up from her menu.

Now, *he* was cute.

KATE

Yes, he was. I think he could be on the team. At least a utility infielder.

MICHELLE

No way. Starting first baseman, batting sixth, maybe even fifth.

MAGGIE

Wait a minute. You are going to kick Tom Cruise off of the All Star Babe team for Nick the grease monkey--both food and auto variety.

MICHELLE

Why not? He's cute, he's funny, he's very

nice.

MAGGIE

Whoa, funny? When did you trade jokes with him?

LORI

Looking up from her menu.

You mean our waiter is the guy who pumped your gas? Ooouuuhhh! That's yecky!

MICHELLE

I'm sure he washed his hands.

NICK returns to the table and all discussion of him ceases.

NICK

Have you ladies decided what you'd like to have.

MICHELLE

Smiling.

Yes, I certainly have...

MAGGIE kicks her under the table.

Ow! Um, can I get the bacon cheeseburger. With onion, pickle and tomato.

MAGGIE

Doesn't it already come with that?

MICHELLE

From between clenched teeth and under her breath.

Jeesh, Mag, do you have to embarrass me in front of the

Spelling aloud

c-u-t-e b-o-y?

KATE

Michelle, he knows how to spell.

She smiles at NICK

I'd like the club sandwich platter, but I want

extra tomato, and is the cole slaw creamy?

NICK looks around for an example of slaw

NICK

What exactly do you mean by creamy, miss?

KATE

Is it runny or is it thick? I can't eat it if it's runny...makes me sick.

She makes a gagging noise.

MAGGIE

Rolling her eyes.

Well, now that I've lost my appetite completely...

KATE

Forget it, I'll have a salad instead of cole slaw, ranch dressing on the side, extra tomato with the sandwich.

LORI

You said that already.

KATE

Looking at LORI but continuing her order.

EXTRA tomato, mayonnaise on the side, and marinara sauce for dipping the fries.

As she finishes her order, KATE notices that the other three have been saying her order with her. NICK, scrambling to write down the order shrugs and looks at MAGGIE for her order.

MAGGIE

BLT on whole wheat toast.

LORI

Before NICK even has a chance to ask her.

Can I get breakfast still?

NICK nods.

OK, I want the Western omelet.

NICK  
Toast with that?

LORI  
Sure.

NICK  
Thank you, ladies. I'll be back with your  
order in a few minutes.

He walks away, leaving LORI and MICHELLE to stare at him as he leaves. MAGGIE  
looks at them, smirks, then glances out the window

KATE  
So, do you think he's going to cook our  
food or change somebody's oil?

She shakes her head.

Only in Indiana.

To MAGGIE.

Ground control, do you read?

MAGGIE  
I was just thinking...

LORI  
Oh, no.

MICHELLE  
Why did you say that?

LORI  
Because whenever she starts a sentence with  
"I was just thinking" you know it's going to  
be some deep philosophical revelation or two  
about God knows what.

MAGGIE  
Never mind then. Is there a jukebox in here?

KATE  
I'm the one who asked what she was  
thinking. Go on, Mag, what was it?

MAGGIE  
No. It's not important...I was just going to  
say...

She begins to smile at her small victory.



As soon as Nick, if I may call him Nick, came over to the table we all stopped talking about him.

To MICHELLE

When you knew he heard you say he was hot you were mortified, right? And you ...

MICHELLE

Yeah. So what are saying?

MAGGIE

Why were you embarrassed that some stranger heard you say he was cute? Men do that all the time.

KATE

I remember one time I was late to a class, so I was walking fast, not running, but you know that little half jog you do when you're in a hurry.

The other three nod.

I'm doing this and these pigs start wagging their tongues at me and yelling, "Shake it, babe. Whoa, I sure like to see that ass move. Come over, baby, and I'll give you a real reason to move that around."

She takes a drink of water, then remembers

I think, actually, one of them said something about "hot pussy."

LORI

NO! Why do they do that? Do they think we like it? Like it's such a compliment that men whose only contact with women is screaming at them on the street or calling 976 numbers think that you're attractive.

MAGGIE

That's my point. We'd rather die than howl at some guy on the street. I mean, are we going to drive around Chicago beating on the sides of my car and making kissy faces at men we don't know?

MICHELLE

Hell, no.

NICK returns to the table with the food. He smiles at them and doesn't understand why they're glaring at him.

NICK  
OK...

To MAGGIE

You had the BLT. And

To MICHELLE

here's your bacon cheeseburger. A  
western omelet

Hands the plate to LORI

and the club sandwich, with all the extras  
you wanted. I'll just leave the check and  
you can pay up front when you're ready.  
Can I do anything else for you today?

MICHELLE  
No thank you. But it was real sweet of you  
to ask.

LORI  
It's his *job* to be sweet.

He walks away, still not comprehending the mood switch.

MICHELLE

Picks up a pickle slice from her plate and begins to wave it around.

Who wants my pickle?

LORI

I'll take it.

With that decided, MICHELLE tosses the pickle into the air and LORI catches it  
in her mouth. As she chews, she turns and smiles at MAGGIE.

MAGGIE

A disgusted look on her face.

You *know* I hate that. And you do it  
everytime we eat. Every single time.  
It's a wonder I can eat at all. Why do  
you always do that?

LORI

She looks at MICHELLE as if for approval before saying.

It's fun.

And she begins to laugh. MAGGIE only tilts her head, sighs and takes a bite of her sandwich.

INT They have finished eating, and begin to sort out money for the check. MAGGIE gets up to pay as the other three head out to the car. After paying, she returns to the table to leave NICK a tip. She takes another drink of water and turns to exit the diner.

EXT MAGGIE gets into the car, noticing KATE in the passenger side. She looks back at LORI, who smiles sheepishly.

LORI

Katie just picks better songs than I do.

MAGGIE

Are you gonna be OK in the back? We're not going to have any claustrophobia, are we?

LORI

Hey, that was a long time ago. And I was drunk at the time.

INT MAGGIE shakes her head and mumbles "all right" to herself and laughs.

EXT The Escort speeds by cornfields, barns and a few cows. MICHELLE "moos" at them, then laughs at how much she has amused herself. She convinces LORI to moo at the next bunch of cows. Soon both of them moo at every cow that the car passes.

KATE

Who wakes up cows?

MAGGIE

Turns to look at her for a split second in disbelief

What?

KATE

Do they hang out in the fields all night? Do they just sleep there and then somehow wake

up in the morning?

She turns to face MAGGIE and the two in the back.

Has there ever been the rebel cow that tried to keep everyone else up all night? What do cows do all day?

LORI

They're cows, doing cow things.

MAGGIE

Cows doing cow things. Yep...Pretty likely.

Turns to KATE

Could you turn the radio up please?

KATE leans forward, and tries to find a song. LORI opens a Coke, offering drinks to everyone in the car. After each of them has a swig, LORI downs the rest of it and throws the can out the window. MAGGIE notices the can fly out onto the road. She slams on the brakes and pulls over.

KATE

What's wrong? What are you doing?

MAGGIE

Ripping off her seat belt and turning to LORI

I cannot believe you did that.

EXT MAGGIE gets out of the car and walks back to where the can is lying. The other three watch her as she picks it up and returns to the car.

MAGGIE

Stands in front of LORI'S open window, thrusts the can into the car.

Aluminum cans are recyclable!

INT MAGGIE starts the car as the others sit in silent disbelief. MICHELLE is the first to start laughing. LORI and KATE soon follow her lead.

MAGGIE

Fighting back her own laughter.

Excuse me for being concerned about the future of the planet.

EXT The car continues into the setting sun, "Already Gone" blaring from out the windows.

EXT The car glides into an upper middle class neighborhood. Manicured lawns and pillared houses announce comfortable lives and country club memberships.

INT KATE leans out the window saying the street names as they pass them. With each street, one of the other three give a first or last name to go with its name. This continues for some time until KATE names the street MELINDA lives on. MAGGIE turns onto it and the pull into her driveway.

EXT The curtain of the home's front window moves slightly and soon MELINDA appears at the front door. She runs to the car and throws her arms around MAGGIE and MICHELLE, who are the first two out of the car. LORI moves to the other side of the car and hugs MELINDA, with KATE close behind her.

MELINDA

I didn't think you'd ever get here. My mother's having an absolute fit...She thinks we're going to be late for the rehearsal dinner. But I figure, I'm the bride, they can't do a damn thing without me.

MICHELLE

What time is the rehearsal dinner anyway?

MELINDA

The rehearsal's at 7:30 and we'll eat after that.

MAGGIE

She looks at her watch.

So we have about half an hour to get ready...All four of us?

MELINDA

Is that a problem? You can do it right? Right?

KATE

Looking at the other three, who are now looking down and kicking the ground, too afraid to disagree.

Sure we can. We'll just change and be ready in a few.

MELINDA turns and looks at MAGGIE, KATE shrugs her shoulders behind MELINDA'S back.

MELINDA

Well then let's get going.

She smiles feebly.

LORI

Whispering to MICHELLE.

She's lost it. I'm sure, we've been in that car forever. We don't even get to shower. We'll really impress Jason's family ...Cinderella and her Skanky Stepsisters.

MICHELLE

She's just under a lot of stress. I guess she didn't notice how bad we looked, or smelled. God, we're awful.

KATE

Hearing them

Just grin and bear it, girls.

EXT MAGGIE unloads the bags from the trunk. She picks up two, MELINDA grabs another one, as KATE meets them behind the car.

MELINDA

I can't believe this is all the stuff you brought for a cross country trip. I'd think you'd want to bring everything you owned since you're all moving.

MAGGIE

As they walk toward the house.

Lori's stuff is already at her parents' new house in Texas. She just brought enough for the wedding and the ride there. I think Michelle sent most of her stuff to Arizona. She won't need much, the clinic has furnished rooms for the staff. And how much do you need to wear in Arizona?

MELINDA

I hear it gets cold there at night.

MAGGIE

Yeah. So anyway...Kate can't take much with her to Korea. Just a few belongings and some clothes. Her parents will send her something, I guess, if she needs it.

MELINDA

What about you?

MAGGIE

Hmmm?

MELINDA

Are you going to stay in California after you drop off Kate or what?

MAGGIE

She stops, looks at the sunset.

I don't know. I guess I should decide, huh?  
But I don't have to do it tonight. We don't want to be late for dinner.

Turning to the three lagging behind her.

C'Mon, Mrs. Pauly.

LORI

Who the **hell** is Mrs. Pauly?

KATE

I think it's from a movie.

LORI

Dropping the bag she was carrying and rubbing her shoulder.

I hate when she pulls that Remington Steele shit. Why can't she just tell us to hurry the way a normal person would?

MICHELLE

Because she's Maggie.

MELINDA'S bathroom. It is done in pink and light blue with a wildflower motif. LORI is brushing her teeth, MICHELLE is curling her hair. MAGGIE and KATE can be seen in MELINDA'S bedroom trying to find things for each of them to wear to the rehearsal dinner.

MAGGIE

Standing over the air conditioner vent in a t shirt.

Shel, can I wear your blue flats, I  
can't find my shoes?

MICHELLE

Leaning out with the curling iron still in her hair.

Yeah, if you can find my white sandals.

MAGGIE holds up the requested shoes.

KATE

I can't believe we have to be at the  
church in fifteen minutes. This will never  
happen at my wedding.

MAGGIE

Slipping a light blue sun dress/jumper over her head

No... I think you've got it planned out to the  
last detail. All you have to do is call everyone  
involved and say, "Mickey Mouse" and we'll  
all be ready. I think Lori already bought her  
shoes for it.

LORI

Entering the room, running her fingers through her hair.

For what?

KATE

My wedding.

MICHELLE

Enters the room crawling, looking for her shoes.

What about your wedding? Has Crazy Allen  
finally asked you?

KATE

No. We were just...Maggie was  
just...saying that I have everything planned.



So we won't be running around with minutes to spare for the rehearsal.

LORI

In CLOSE UP, putting on mascara at MELINDA'S vanity.

I hope I get to walk down the aisle with somebody cute. At my cousin's wedding, I had to walk with the groom's brother, who was about 45 and just got out of prison.

MICHELLE

Zippering her skirt and tucking in a sleeveless blouse.

The pictures from that are great. You look scared to death.

LORI

Turning around.

I was. I thought he might try to kill me if I didn't dance with him or something. That whole picture taking was an ordeal.

MAGGIE

Bending behind LORI to put on lipstick, there is a shot of their two faces in the mirror.

I recall those dresses being especially pretty. They had those big red cabbage roses on them.

LORI

ALL over them. It looked like someone had thrown wads of paper at me and they stuck.

MICHELLE

My wedding won't be anything like that.

KATE

What wedding?

MICHELLE

Very funny.

There is a knock at the door and MELINDA'S mother, MRS. WELLES, enters the room.

MRS. WELLES

My, don't you all look so pretty. This will

be the most beautiful wedding party I've ever seen. You all mean so much to my little girl.

She starts to snifle.

MAGGIE

Stands up after putting on her shoes and walks over to MELINDA'S mother.

I think we're ready to go now, Mrs. Welles.

She pats her on the shoulder.

Don't want to be late.

Everyone stands, straightening her clothes and checking herself in the mirror on the way out of the room. MRS. WELLES is the last to leave. She pauses in the doorway before shutting off the light.

LORI and KATE walking down the stairs.

LORI

If she would have started crying, I would have lost it. I must be premenstrual...I'm crying at anything these days.

KATE

I know...The hormones are raging. I hope I make it through the ceremony tomorrow without humiliating myself. Oh, remind me to wear the water-proof mascara--I don't need to look like a football player at the reception.

MR. and MRS. WELLES getting into their car. MELINDA and the other women get into her car. The cars pull out of the drive way and MELINDA follows her parents to the church.

INT The wedding party is gathered around the altar of a Catholic church. The priest is giving instructions to MELINDA and JASON. Their parents sit behind them in the first pew. MAGGIE, MICHELLE, LORI and KATE stand beside MELINDA and try to keep from laughing, as the priest keeps forgetting the names of the couple. The groomsmen stand with their hands in their pockets and look around the church.

INT A MEDIUM SHOT of MAGGIE, MICHELLE, KATE, and MELINDA sitting at a table. LORI stands in front of them, trying to take their picture. There are glasses and bottles scattered in front of them. They are all obviously drunk and laughing uproariously at whatever one of them says.

LORI

Excuse me, I have to run to the bathroom.  
I, oops,

She stumbles over the best man's chair.

sorry about that. I'll be right back.

MICHELLE  
You never could hold your liquor.

Getting up.

Hang on , I'll go with you.

LORI and MICHELLE walking into the bathroom. LORI goes into a stall, MICHELLE enters the one right beside her. Their dialogue is heard from behind the closed doors, as we see a full shot of the two doors.

LORI  
Hey, Shel, smile.

MICHELLE  
What?

LORI  
Smile. Jeesh...I want to take your picture.  
Bend your head under the wall.

MICHELLE  
OK.

LORI'S hands appear under the door, holding the camera as steady as she can. There is a flash and then a thud as MICHELLE hits her head on the wall.

LORI  
Are you all right?

MICHELLE  
Laughing.

I think so. Pass that crazy camera over here. I'll take your picture.

LORI  
YEAH! It'll be a matched set. We could give it to Mel as a wedding present!

The camera falls to the floor. We see MICHELLE'S hand as she scrambles to pick it up. LORI'S head is visible under the door, followed by a flash.

LORI  
Uh, Shel...I don't know if I can sit back up.

MICHELLE

Struggling to open the door as we hear the toilet flush.

Hang on, I'll go get someone.

LORI

No, just a second...There, I think I got it. OK.

There is another flush as LORI emerges from the stall. MICHELLE climbs onto the counter as she washes her hands.

MICHELLE

Could I look worse?

LORI

Yes, you could look like the guy I have to walk with tomorrow. Do you have any lipstick?

MICHELLE

Yeah...

She reaches into her purse. She rests her head against the wall and looks at LORI applying lipstick in the mirror.

I can't believe she's getting married. Do you remember when we met Mel?

LORI

Sits on the counter.

Oh, need to rest. Uh huh...God, was that our first week sophomore year?

MICHELLE

The first weekend we were back. Her roommate wouldn't let her in because her boyfriend was visiting. And Mel was trying to sleep in the study lounge.

LORI

Starting to laugh.

She was snoring...and she woke us up. She was so embarrassed.

MICHELLE

And then we made her stay in our room. Did we get any sleep after that?

LORI

No, not that night or the rest of the year. She had us up till the crack of dawn every night. And I didn't mind once.

Both stay on the counter, dangling their legs and lost in their own memories of friendship. KATE enters to check on them.

KATE

What are the two of you doing in here?  
We're getting ready to leave. Mrs. Welles is going to take us. Melinda's all but passed out now.

LORI and MICHELLE jump from the counter and walk toward the door with KATE.

LORI

Holding the door.

She'll be pleasant in the morning. Like she's not enough of a problem already.

MICHELLE

Walking by her.

And you'll be in tiptop your damn self tomorrow.

LORI

Shut up.

LORI turns to walk out and has a huge water spot on the back of her skirt. The door closes behind her.

MAGGIE and Mr. Welles are half carrying MELINDA to his car. MAGGIE apologizes for friend's drunkenness. They get MELINDA into the car, laying down.

MR. WELLES

No need to apologize. As I recall, I tied on a good one before my wedding. When you're taking a big step like marriage, everything gets pretty overwhelming. The whole world is rushing past you and everyone's giving you "expert" advice. Melinda just needed to forget for a few moments all of that weight. I'm glad she has someone like you girls to take care of her and help her let go of all that for a bit.

MAGGIE

Yes, sir. I think that's what I like best about Jason. He made her laugh and always made her feel safe. Even when she was scared she'd never find a job, right before she started at the hospital, Jason was the only one

who made her happy. She's very lucky to have him.

MR. WELLES

Looking at MELINDA curled up in the car.

*He's* very lucky to have *her*.

He turns to get into the front seat.

MAGGIE

CLOSE UP, to herself more than to him.

Yeah, he is.

EXT KATE, LORI, MICHELLE and MRS. WELLES are walking toward MELINDA'S car. MAGGIE jogs over to them so she can ride back with them. KATE starts to open the passenger door when MAGGIE grabs her hand. MAGGIE glances at LORI, who is looking at sky.

LORI

I can't remember a damn thing from my astronomy class. I hate that.

KATE

To MAGGIE.

You're right. We better not chance her in the back. Lor, time to get in the car.

LORI

Where's Michelle? I'm not going anywhere without Shelly.

MICHELLE

From inside the car.

I'm in here, dufus. Get in the car, will ya. I'm tired.

KATE

To MRS. WELLES.

They get a little cranky when they've been drinking.

LORI gets into the car. Once she is safely in, KATE and MAGGIE get in the back with the dozing MICHELLE. MRS. WELLES shakes her head with a barely

audible "Oh, dear."

INT MRS. WELLES looks into the rearview mirror. KATE is seated in the middle, with MAGGIE and MICHELLE resting their heads on her shoulders. LORI has almost faded to sleep when she perks up at the song on the radio.

LORI

Singing along

"I've got sunshine, on a cloudy day.  
When it's cold outside, I've got the month of  
May."

MRS. WELLES staring at her in shock.

MICHELLE

Singing along.

"I guess you'd say  
What could make me feel this way."

MAGGIE

Singing, with her head still on KATE'S shoulder.

"My girl..."

KATE

Joining in the chorus.

"My girl..."

All of them singing, with a silent and confused MRS. WELLES looking at the road, but avoiding them.

ALL

Those in backseat are now sitting upright and holding hands as they sing.

"I don't need no money, fortune or fame.  
I've got all the riches one man can claim."

EXT The car heads into the suburban darkness as LORI, MICHELLE, KATE and MAGGIE finish singing the chorus of "My Girl."

VOICE OVER.

MICHELLE

I *love* the Four Tops.

MAGGIE

It's The Temptations.

MICHELLE

Whatever.

INT Later that night, LORI, MAGGIE, MICHELLE and KATE are trying to sleep in MELINDA'S basement. LORI and MICHELLE are laying on an ancient kingsize bed. KATE is on a rickety couch and MAGGIE is on the floor in a "Star Wars" sleeping bag. Despite being very drunk, not one of them, except MICHELLE can sleep.

LORI

Is anybody asleep?

KATE

No, at least, I'm not.

LORI punches MICHELLE.

MICHELLE

Huh? What is it? Something wrong?

LORI

No, just wanted to see if you were sleeping?

MICHELLE

Well, I'm not now. We have to get up early tomorrow. Just let me go back to sleep, please.

LORI

Whispering.

Hey, Mag...Are you...

To herself.

Why am I whispering?

To MAGGIE.

Are you up?



MAGGIE

Not really. This floor isn't exactly the most comfortable place on earth. And this sleeping bag smells funny... I think Mel's brother took it camping or something. It's very difficult to sleep with this damp mold smell.

LORI

You wanna sleep up here?

MICHELLE

Sitting up.

Where is she going to fit? We have to get up at the crack of dawn, and I'd like to look halfway decent. Three of us cannot fit comfortably on this godforsaken bed.

MAGGIE stands, leaves the sleeping bag on the floor and walks over to the bed. She climbs in next to MICHELLE.

MAGGIE

Hi, sweetie. Scooch over.

MICHELLE

This has been a circus!

KATE

Finally sitting up and getting into the conversation.

From the get go. I can't believe how this going. Did you see how Mrs. Welles was looking at us?

MAGGIE

Beginning to laugh.

I don't think she approved.

MICHELLE

Turning to her, realizing efforts to sleep are in vain.

What was your first clue? Maybe when she stared at us as soon as we got out of the car. I swear, she'd never seen people look grungy before.

KATE

And the ride back from dinner. Lord,  
I don't think Motown is her thing.

MAGGIE

Not at all. Did she even look at us?

LORI

She stared at me for awhile. I  
Think my singing scared her.

MICHELLE

Oh, I can't imagine that?

MELINDA begins to descend the stairs to the basement. They hear creaking and begin to get quiet, in case it is a parent. There is silence until MELINDA walks over to KATE'S couch.

MELINDA

Will you guys hold it down. Some  
people are trying to sleep.

LORI

Who?

MELINDA

I'm sure my parents are. God knows  
I couldn't.

She sits down by KATE on the couch.

I can't believe I'm actually going to  
marry Jason. Tomorrow.

MICHELLE

I know everybody's stressed out about  
this wedding, but don't you think we'd  
all feel better after a good night's sleep?  
Hmmm? Doesn't that sound like a good  
idea?

MELINDA stands and walks over to the foot of the bed. She crawls up to rest between MICHELLE and MAGGIE. After a second, KATE moves over to the bed. OVERHEAD SHOT shows all of them cramped but somehow comfortable on the bed.

LORI

This is much better. I think I could  
sleep now. Goodnight, John-Boy.

She rolls over with her back to everyone else on the bed.

MICHELLE

Very funny. I *was* asleep. I don't know

why everyone had to wake me. I could sleep just fine.

MELINDA

Will you shut up, I have to get married in a few hours. I need my rest.

MAGGIE

Hey, think about it, Mel. This is the last chance you'll have to sleep with a bunch of women. Jason'll be happy about that, don't ya think?

MELINDA laughs as they all fall asleep. There is a gradual dissolve to DAY when MRS. WELLES comes down to wake everyone. She is relieved to find MELINDA, who she had suspected had run away in the night. She is nonetheless confused by the five asleep together.

MRS. WELLES

Shaking MELINDA'S foot.

Dear, time to get up. You have to start getting ready. Coffee's on. Come on, tweetie bird, time to wake up.

MELINDA rolls over, hitting MAGGIE in the head. Seeing she is awake, MRS. WELLES goes back upstairs.

MAGGIE

Watch it, tweetie bird... You're gonna bruise a bride's maid.

INT LORI and MICHELLE are brushing their teeth in MELINDA'S bathroom. LORI is wearing pantyhose and a t shirt and her hair is in pincurls all over her head. MICHELLE is wearing a bright pink robe which belonged to MELINDA when she was much younger.

INT In the adjoining bedroom, KATE is trying to paint her nails while MAGGIE curls her hair. Both are in various stages of clothing preparedness for the ensuing wedding.

INT MELINDA bursts into the bedroom. She is wearing a white bustier, a matching crinoline and carrying her hose. She slams the door behind her and stands with her back against it for a moment.

MELINDA

In CLOSE UP, exhaling the words.

Sonofabitch!

KATE

Looking at her in shock.

What? Good Lord, Mel.

INT MELINDA walks over to the bed and throws herself on it. She is beginning to cry. We see her from behind and can see her shoulders shaking. Suddenly, she sits up and turns around.

MELINDA

My mother is driving me crazy. You'd think this was her wedding. I can't go through with this.

LORI, hearing the commotion, walks into the room. She is followed almost immediately by MICHELLE, who walks over to MELINDA.

MICHELLE

Okay.

MAGGIE and KATE turn to her in horror with shouts of disbelief frozen in their throats.

If she doesn't want to do this, we can't make her.

MELINDA

Do you mean it?

She turns to look at the door when she hears a knock. She grabs MICHELLE'S hand, desperately.

Don't let them know I'm in here.

MRS. WELLES

Her voice is heard through the door.

Melinda, are you in there?

MAGGIE

Under her breath to KATE, who smacks her immediately upon hearing her.

Where the hell else would she be?

She mouths an "I'm sorry." to KATE and shrugs slightly.

MRS. WELLES

Listen, Melinda. I know you're nervous.  
But that's natural. Please, let's just finish  
getting dressed.

MELINDA

Screaming, so her mother can hear her, but causing the others to shudder.

I don't want to. I don't want to get married  
anymore. I don't want to go through with  
this and you can't make me.

LORI and MICHELLE exchange looks which say they are a little impressed with  
MELINDA. MAGGIE merely shakes her head.

MRS. WELLES

Melinda Ashley Welles, stop behaving like a  
child.

KATE

Score one for mom!

MELINDA turns to her, surprised.

MELINDA

Hissing at KATE

Who's side are you on?

KATE rises and walks over to the door. She opens it and talks to MRS. WELLES for a  
moment. Closing the door, she returns to everyone else in the room. She sits on the floor  
in front of MELINDA and takes her hand. We see MEDIUM SHOT of the two of them,  
surrounded by the others, with warm sunlight filling the room.

KATE

Mel, let me ask you one thing. Do you love  
Jason?

MELINDA wipes away a tear from her eye but isn't given the chance to answer before  
KATE continues.

Since the day you met him in our  
speech class, you've been in love with him.  
You used to plot ways to see him. I  
remember once you sent Maggie and me  
to spy on his house to let you know when  
he left for class so you could bump into  
him. When he finally asked you out,  
you borrowed something from everyone on  
the floor until you had the perfect outfit.  
Now, you've got everything you've always  
wanted, and you don't want it?

A CLOSE UP of MELINDA as she shakes her head and starts crying again.

MELINDA

What if I'm wrong? What if this is all wrong for me? What if I ruin my life?

MAGGIE

Who is fumbling idly with a bridesmaid dress.

Maybe you could have thought of this before you mailed the invites, Mel.

LORI

God, Maggie. Do you have to be so cruel to her. I thought maybe we could all get along this weekend.

She stands and, tripping over a shoe, heads for the bathroom and slams the door when she gets in there.

A CLOSE UP of a disgusted MICHELLE.

MICHELLE

Could we leave Mel alone. If she doesn't want to get married today...

MAGGIE

Who is now standing, looking out the window at the several cars in the WELLES' driveway

We have to make her! Stop trying to be so damn nice, Shel. This is serious. There are *a lot* of people who have spent *a lot* of money. Are we just going to stroll into the church and say, "Oops, wedding's off. Find yourself another girl, better luck next time, Jay, babe."?

MELINDA rises from the bed, thrusts out her arms and begins to scream.

MELINDA

LORI! Get back in here! All of you sit down.

She points at MAGGIE. LORI walks in and sits by MAGGIE.

And don't any of you say another word.

Clenching her fists, she unleashes another yell.

MOM...MOM! Could you come up here!  
Please!

The sound of rapidly moving feet is heard outside the door, followed by a knock.

Come in!

MRS. WELLES obliges and settles into the chair by the vanity.

All right. I *will* get married.

MRS. WELLES releases an audible sigh of relief. MELINDA shoots her a death look, causing her to smile sheepishly.

MAGGIE and MICHELLE who exchange relieved but knowing glances.

MELINDA

But, Mom, you can't bother me about it.  
I'll get dressed and I'll be ready for the  
pictures. But I will not have you screaming  
at me every five seconds. So, you can leave  
now.

MRS. WELLES doesn't move for a moment.

*You can leave now.*

MRS. WELLES

Standing quickly and brushing off the front of her dressing gown.

Yes. Of course. Thank you, dear.

She kisses MELINDA on the cheek. As she exits, MAGGIE smiles and waves to her.

MELINDA

To MAGGIE

Behave yourself, Mary Margaret.

MAGGIE grins at her before getting up and heading into the bathroom. LORI and KATE continue working on their hair and nails, respectively. MELINDA walks over to MICHELLE.

MELINDA

Thanks for not forcing me to get married.

MICHELLE

I knew you'd do exactly what you wanted,  
no matter what anyone else said. So I  
figured it would be safer to agree with you.  
Besides, I knew you wouldn't call it off.

MELINDA

And just how did you know that?

From behind them, MAGGIE enters the room from the bathroom. She is wearing her dress, but she is barefoot. Her hair is still a mess and she wears no makeup. MICHELLE turns when she hears the dress rustle behind her. The dress is teal, with a sweetheart neckline. The sleeves, and the skirt, are a little too poofy for comfort.

MICHELLE

That's why. I knew you wouldn't let an  
opportunity for us to look like complete  
jackasses slip by.

A MEDIUM SHOT of MAGGIE trying in vain to knock down the skirt. She looks up at MELINDA imploringly.

MAGGIE

Do I have to wear this? I look like a bell.  
A very bright, blue bell.

LORI passes her on the way into the bathroom.

LORI

It's teal!

MAGGIE

Whatever. Just somebody help me out of  
this.

KATE walks over to help her out of it. She winks at MELINDA.

KATE

I like them. I think it's a pretty color.

MAGGIE

You only like it because it makes your eyes  
look "so blue."

Her voice takes on a whiny tone to make fun of something KATE may once have said.



You look like a Hitler youth poster,  
and I look like a Disney fairy godmother.

LORI re-enters the scene. She is wearing a strapless bra and a pair of boxer shorts. Once freed from her dress, MAGGIE is wearing a bustier and pantyhose. Realizing what she is wearing, and looking at the clothes of both LORI and MELINDA, MAGGIE begins to sing a Madonna song. MELINDA runs to her stereo and puts in a CD which begins to play "Cherish." MAGGIE leaps onto the bed to dance. LORI and MICHELLE start rolling on the floor, kicking their legs to the beat. KATE, who is diligently searching for her shoes, is not in the mood for singing.

KATE

Will you knock that off. I cannot find my shoes. Come on...

MELINDA has by this time scurried over to KATE and grabbed her arms in an attempt to force her to dance.

MELINDA

VOGUE?

KATE

Ha ha. You just think you are so clever, don't you.

MELINDA nods, smiling.

Well you're not. You just aren't. You just...

KATE can no longer fight her desire to dance now. She begins to do a pseudo--jitterbug with MELINDA. The dancing continues for a few moments until there is a loud knock at the door.

MRS. WELLES

Melinda. MELINDA. What are you doing in there?

MELINDA

Laughing

Getting dressed?

MRS. WELLES

Well hurry. Your cousins are here. They wanted to see you before the ceremony.

MELINDA walks over to the door as LORI turns down the stereo. She opens the door wide and MRS. WELLES is slightly aghast at the scene.

MELINDA

Who?

MRS. WELLES

Regaining her composure after the initial blow.

Your cousins from Missouri are here.  
They wanted to see you before you went  
to the church. Just a little private  
*family* time.

Her last remark is obviously aimed at the interlopers her daughter has been spending so much time with.

MELINDA

Mom, I haven't seen them since I was 12.  
Can't they wait until the reception like  
everyone else?

MRS. WELLES

Just come down now, Melinda. Say "hello."  
It won't kill you to see them for a minute.

MELINDA obliges and exits the room. MAGGIE, who had been lying on the bed, stands now and wanders to the vanity.

MAGGIE

Picking up a tube of lipstick.

She hates us. Dad likes us. But she *hates*  
us.

LORI

Moving behind her, patting her on the shoulder.

She hasn't seen us at the reception yet.

The two women face one another and smile.

INT Late afternoon, the fading sun filters into the church through stained glass windows. The wedding party surrounds the altar, each jostling one another to follow the directions of the shouting photographer.

A CLOSE UP of LORI and KATE who seem to be smiling but are actually gritting their teeth.

KATE

I thought it was bad luck for the bride and groom to see each other before the ceremony.

LORI

Only for the wedding party.

PHOTOGRAPHER

That's great! Now can I have the bride and her lovely bridesmaids over here.

He waves his hands in a vague direction and they all try to follow.

MAGGIE

Ouch. Shit! If I trip in these damn shoes one more time, I swear I'll kill...

LORI

Shhh. We are in a church, Mag.

MAGGIE

Looking up.

Sorry. I forgot.

The PHOTOGRAPHER lines them up, shifting their positions several times. With each change, the women say several "Excuse me"s and "Pardon"s. They step around, on, and over one another in the blur of his flashbulbs until he has the ideal shot. The sound of their laughter and the light of the flash gradually

DISSOLVE TO

A MEDIUM SHOT of MELINDA and JASON standing in front of a candle, and the priest's voice. We follow their movements for a moment in the MEDIUM SHOT but then PULL BACK to a FULL SHOT of the two of them as they move back to the center in front of the altar.

A CLOSE UP of each of the bridesmaids, starting with MICHELLE on one end of the pew to MAGGIE at the other, as we hear the couple recite their vows. Each of them is crying, or has tears in her eyes, and is smiling. The camera stays on MAGGIE for a moment, as she feels MRS. WELLES staring at her. She wipes a tear from her eye and waves to MRS. WELLES, who looks down at the floor immediately.

INT FULL SHOT JASON and MELINDA turn around as the priest introduces Mr. and Mrs. Buchanan. Everyone in the church applauds, with the loudest cheer coming from the front pew of bridesmaids.

MELINDA'S face in CLOSE UP, smiling beatifically at her friends. Everything behind her blurs until we have the same CLOSE UP as we DISSOLVE to the reception. This time the camera PULLS BACK to show MELINDA and JASON holding hands and walking onto the dance floor. The DJ introduces them as "Mr. and Mrs. Buchanan," as they dance to Sinatra's "The Best is Yet to Come." There is the usual round of polite applause from the crowd. But the focus is on MELINDA and JASON until they dance in front of the bridesmaids. Then the camera stays with them and registers their ecstatic reaction to their friend's dance. MAGGIE is the first to stop watching, as she turns to take a drink of champagne. KATE turns to ask her a question and their conversation begins.

A MEDIUM SHOT of MAGGIE and KATE talking. The rest of the reception continues around them but they speak, oblivious to the action.

KATE

What're you thinking about?

MAGGIE

How weird all of this is. Mel is someone's *wife*. This girl that I used to write notes to in bio is *Mrs.* Buchanan. Til death do they part, Katie. I just can't quite believe that one.

KATE

Picking up a glass of champagne and drinking it quickly

I know. God, she looks so happy. It's like this is all so mature. *Too* mature for us to be doing. It's not like it's really happening.

MAGGIE

Searching for another glass of champagne somewhere on the table. She has to almost stand up but she is successful in finding two full glasses. Picking up both of them, she hands one to KATE.

MAGGIE

Right. And I'm so happy for her. But I can't believe that she's so happy. Look at her out there. Everything's right. She's not worried about a damn thing. For a while, her life makes sense. A few hours ago, it was chaos. Now it's a dream. A goddamn dream.

She swallows the last of the champagne. As she sets down the glass, there is a call for the wedding party to join the bride and groom on the dance floor. The four bridesmaids prod one another up and exchange loaded glances as each takes the hand of her aisle escort. A FULL SHOT reveals each of them dancing awkwardly with their partners to. MAGGIE'S

towers above her, while KATE towers above hers. MICHELLE'S partner is beautiful though he is the groom's younger brother, just about to start college. LORI'S partner is holding her much too close, with his hands on her bottom and his face buried in her neck. As MELINDA dances by MAGGIE taps her on the shoulder and points to LORI. MAGGIE in turn taps MICHELLE and KATE who begin to giggle at LORI'S predicament. Soon all five of them are smiling at one another, once LORI catches on to what is so funny. As the song ends, the bridal party separates to applaud the bride and groom. Once that ordeal is over, the bridesmaids meet up on the way back to the table.

MICHELLE

She grabs LORI'S hand as they walk over to the buffet table.

Did you survive the run-in with molester boy?

LORI

Shaking her head

Can you believe that? I thought we were in junior high again. I don't even know him. I wish you could have heard him too.

MICHELLE

The "best of Elvis" pick-up lines?

LORI

Worse. "Wait until this music picks up, I'm a dancing machine."

MICHELLE

Yelling in his general direction.

Get out of the '70s, slime ball!

LORI

What about that jailbait you were with. What is he, 18?

MICHELLE

As a matter of fact....

LORI

He was a babe.

MICHELLE

Junior babe. One day, maybe when he starts shaving, he can be a babe.

The two arrive at the table and see the two men they were discussing. Both men smile and wave their forks at them. LORI'S partner licks his lips suggestively to her. She rolls her eyes and stares at the ceiling.

LORI

Can you believe that? Like he's at all attractive. That tongue hanging out. Yecch.

MICHELLE

Where did Jason dig him up, anyway?

Looking ahead of her at the table.

Hey, they've got those cheese puff things. I *love* those cheese puff things at receptions.

LORI

Calm down, will ya.

She looks over at the table where her partner is sitting.

He might think *you* like him, too.

KATE comes up behind them with her plate full. MICHELLE grabs a cheese puff from her plate. KATE looks at her a little surprised, but says nothing.

KATE

Talking with some bread in her mouth.

Nice date, Lor. Are you going to let any of us dance with him, are do you want to keep him to yourself?

LORI

She is eating a stalk of celery from KATE'S plate, which she uses to point to her as she speaks.

I'm glad everyone enjoyed that dance. I'm being fondled by a stranger, and you guys think it's funny. Thanks a lot.

She looks behind KATE and says

Oh, no.

Both KATE and MICHELLE then see MAGGIE walking toward them. KATE and LORI move up slowly in line, pick up their plates and begin to put some food on their plates.

MAGGIE

Hey, Lor, maybe we should have made this a double ceremony. Nice guy Mel gave you.

LORI

Yours wasn't exactly a prize.

MAGGIE

He had a nice belt. That was about all I saw of him. Lor, grab some of those veggies over there. Put some more dip on your plate, too. It's really good stuff.

By now, MAGGIE and KATE have moved back into the line, much to the consternation of the multitude of people behind LORI and MICHELLE. While they are getting dirty looks, they ignore the disgruntled throng, except for one remark.

MAGGIE

Turning to a middle-aged man behind MICHELLE

They don't feed us too well at that *place*.

The four of them, plates loaded with food, head back to their table. They pass the groomsmen and nearly run by them. When they walk past MELINDA they each stop to say something to her. Finally settled into their seats, they continue eating and, more importantly, drinking.

MAGGIE

I'm going over to the bar. Anybody want anything?

No one says anything.

Okay. Does anybody at least want to walk over there with me? Please.

MICHELLE

Getting up.

All right, I'll go.

As they walk away from the table, MAGGIE leans over to MICHELLE

MAGGIE

Shel, can we stop by the DJ's for a sec?

MICHELLE

What do you have in mind, exactly?

MAGGIE  
You'll see.

She walks a little ahead of her.

MICHELLE

Stopping for a second, stomping her foot down and almost screaming to herself

No! I hate when she says that!

She then notices a little old couple staring at her. MICHELLE smiles and waves to them. She then catches up with MAGGIE, who gives her a mischievous grin. They continue up to the DJ. MAGGIE talks to him for a moment and sends MICHELLE over to the bar for four drinks. MAGGIE takes the microphone and calls LORI and KATE up to the mike. MICHELLE returns with the drinks and they each take one.

MAGGIE

In a CLOSE UP, as she raises the glass

We'd like to do a song for the bride.

There is an audible gasp from MRS. WELLES as she prepares for the worst.

This is a song we all used to sing at various occasions. So we lift our glasses of Cuervo to you, Mel, who understands fully its strange and wondrous powers.

She steps back, and speaks with the other three. After working out the details, they gather around the mike, MAGGIE in front, KATE to her right, and LORI and MICHELLE behind her a little and to the left.

CLOSE UP of MELINDA who is laughing as she recognizes the opening strains of the song. It is an old country song by David Allan Coe, "You Never Even Call Me By My Name."

The group is singing and waving their glasses. LORI and MICHELLE are the backup singers and have their elaborate motions well rehearsed. KATE chimes in as a background singer at certain points, as she and MAGGIE hold the mike. It is song they have all sung a million times, in drunken reverie and sober remembrances. While the crowd appears stunned, they are nonetheless enjoying the performance. In particular, the new Mrs. Buchanan, who joins her friends for the last verse and encourages a singalong. Not wanting to disappoint the bride, everyone obliges. As the song ends, the five girls are laughing with one another.

A CLOSE UP of each of them, starting with MELINDA and working around the "circle," shows the absolute delight they feel with one another, a feeling geography and time won't easily erase.



JASON joins the group and leads his wife out. He whispers to her and she realizes that they must get ready to leave for the hotel. She hugs each of the women and they follow her to the table and then the front door of the hall.

A MEDIUM SHOT of MAGGIE and KATE. MAGGIE leans on KATE'S shoulder as she takes off her shoes.

MAGGIE

I've had these heels on long enough. Once the bride leaves, I think I can take 'em off. You'd agree?

KATE

Whatever. Will you hurry, though, we're lagging behind.

MAGGIE

Promise me something, Katie. Don't cry when we say goodbye to her. I don't want to be bawling then. She shouldn't be thinking about us crying. Not now.

KATE

I won't if you don't. What about the other boneheads though. Michelle's probably crying already.

MAGGIE

She's too drunk to cry.

She walks by KATE and catches up to LORI and MICHELLE who are slapping at each other and laughing drunkenly.

KATE

Yeah... No!

Yelling up to MAGGIE

That didn't make any sense.

MAGGIE

Shouting over her shoulder

Sure it did. C'mon, Kate, catch up with the rest of us.

MICHELLE

Yeah, "C'mon, Mrs. Pauly."

She looks to MAGGIE for a sign of approval. MAGGIE supplies it with a laugh and a pat on back. LORI stops in her tracks, refusing to walk with the conspirators any longer.

KATE catches up with her and they follow the rest to the front of the hall.

MEDIUM SHOT, MELINDA, turns and looks at her friends behind her. JASON goes outside and can be seen talking to the limo driver and picking up luggage behind MELINDA.

MELINDA

You guys behave yourselves the rest of the reception, okay? And please be nice to my mother tomorrow before you leave. She's been through hell this week.

KATE

Today in particular was a little bad.

The women all laugh. No one is willing to make the first attempt at goodbye and so they stand there idly for a short time. LORI realizes she has her camera and begins putting everyone together for pictures. JASON re-enters and she hands the camera to him.

LORI

Here. Take a picture of all of us. Take two.

Turning to MELINDA

I'll get doubles, all right?

MELINDA

Quietly.

That's fine, Lor. Whatever you want to do.

JASON

Mel, we really need to get going. Here you go.

He hands the camera back to LORI.

I'll wait in the car, hon.

MELINDA

Okay, um...

MICHELLE

You got everything? Toothbrush, shampoo..

MAGGIE

They sell those things where they're going.

MELINDA

Smiling a little as she nods and looks at MICHELLE

Yeah, I got everything.

MICHELLE

Okay, uh...

LORI

Speaking up to avoid any lull in conversation

When are you coming back?

MELINDA

We'll be gone two weeks. Then we move into the house.

LORI

Nodding

Oh, the house.

KATE

Uh-oh--Here comes Jay again.

MELINDA

Turning to face him.

I know! I'm trying!

Her voice breaks slightly. JASON turns and head back to the limo, shaking his head.

MAGGIE

Well, uh, looks like everything's loaded. Jeesh--including us.

There is a feeble attempt at laughter from everyone.

MICHELLE

Hugging Melinda

Okay, take care. Let me know when you get back. Okay?

MELINDA

Nods as she holds her and tries to keep from shaking. Her voice is a loud wail as she says

Yeah.

KATE

Stepping in to alleviate some of the crying, she now hugs MELINDA.

My turn. Have a good time. Send me a postcard, Mel.

MAGGIE and LORI exchange puzzled looks but say nothing. LORI move closer to the center of the crying.

LORI

All right.

Hugs MELINDA

Don't boss him around too much.

MELINDA

Laughing during the interim of sobs

I'll try not to.

She turns to face the car. Turning back to the group, she takes MAGGIE'S hand. MAGGIE puts her arms around her.

MAGGIE

Have a good time. Um...

A CLOSE UP of MELINDA as she talks to her friend. She has some control of her voice now.

MELINDA

Yeah. So what are going to do?

They separate and the CLOSE UP is of the two of them looking at one another.

MAGGIE

The big question! I don't know, maybe I'll go on the game show circuit.

MELINDA

Smiling now

You'll think of something, eh?

MAGGIE

Joining her in the smile.

Always do!

JASON re-enters the scene. He hesitates for a moment before joining them. He moves behind MELINDA and places his arm around her waist.

JASON

That's all of it.

He moves around the arc that has formed around MELINDA and hugs each of the bridesmaids quickly.

Thanks for everything.

MELINDA and JASON turn and walk to the limo. The four of them are left to watch. We see them in a FULL SHOT as they wave to the car.

A FULL SHOT of the four of them waving to her. They stand there for a moment and say nothing to one another. Slowly the camera moves up until we have them in a MEDIUM SHOT as they begin to move and speak again.

MICHELLE

Suddenly.

Shit!

LORI

What?

MICHELLE

I didn't wish her good luck.

LORI

Reassuring her.

Sure you did.

MICHELLE

Disappointed.

No, I didn't.

KATE

Putting her arm around MICHELLE.

She knows, Shel. She knows.

MAGGIE

Suddenly clapping her hands. She grabs MICHELLE'S hand and pulls her, and thus the rest of the group, back toward the reception.

All right. C'mon, kids. Let's go liven up what's left of this lame-o party.

KATE

Not too lively--we have to spend another night at the chateau Welles.

MAGGIE

Ohhh, what fun.

INT The bridesmaids are at the door of the hall as they hear "Reunited." MAGGIE makes an "ugh" face and leads them into the room, which is now only sparsely filled. MAGGIE and MICHELLE walk over to talk to the DJ and are joined by KATE and LORI. MR. WELLES walks over and whispers something to the DJ, who stands and begins to speak.

DJ

Ladies and gentlemen...

MAGGIE throws her hand over the microphone and grabs him by the lapel, knocking back into his chair. She says something to him and he gets up again.

DJ

Ladies and gentlemen...

He flinches, expecting a repeat of the attack.

This will be the last song of the evening. It will be a special, um, request?

MAGGIE nods to him. Before the music begins, LORI gets behind her, followed by KATE and MICHELLE. With the train formed the song kicks in, sending shock waves through the remaining guests startled by the Clash's "Should I Stay or Should I Go?" MR. WELLES, undaunted, joins the train and pulls MRS. WELLES onto it as well. The train grows as each of the guests joins on, most in spite of themselves. As the song plays, the bridesmaids head for the limo parked in front of the hall reserved for them and collapse into it.

INT Morning, the four bridesmaids are all asleep on the bed in the basement. They are all still dressed from the evening before in some form or another. Each of them groans at the sunlight and the shock that they are awake again. KATE sits up and attempts to stand. She stumbles up is joined by MAGGIE. Neither one speaks to the other, only grunting "excuse me's." They head upstairs to face MRS. WELLES, since neither feels the other

should have to do it alone. At the top of the stairs, both almost topple backwards and grab onto the handrail, and each other, to steady themselves.

MAGGIE

Oh my God. We have to get out of here ASAP. I'm sure I'm going to die. And I don't want to die in this dress with only *that woman* to make the arrangements.

KATE

Amen. Alleluia. Open the door.

MAGGIE obliges and they are greeted by a much too cheerful MRS. WELLES. She is in a pink floral bathrobe and is wiping off the stove.

MRS. WELLES

Good morning girls. Coffee?

KATE

No thank you. I just want to shower.

MAGGIE

Uh-huh. Me too. I'll just go upstairs and do that.

KATE gives her a filthy albeit frightened look. She grabs her hand and MRS. WELLES looks at them quizzically.

MRS. WELLES

One of you could use the other shower, if that would save you some time.

KATE

Oh, that's a good idea. Isn't that a good idea, Maggie?

MAGGIE

You bet, Katie.

Each looks at the other as if she's just lost her mind. They turn to head upstairs and MRS. WELLES calls to them.

MRS. WELLES

She has the hopeful look of someone desperate to do for others.

Would you girls like something to eat?

MAGGIE and KATE look at one another, afraid to refuse such a kind gesture.

MAGGIE

Sure. Lunch would be great.

MRS. WELLES

Picking up a frying pan from the sink next to her and slamming it on the stove.

I didn't want to cook! But I guess I will!

A CLOSE UP of MAGGIE and KATE, big-eyed and anxious to leave. They turn and walk away.

INT BASEMENT KATE and MAGGIE are dressed and LORI and MICHELLE have just showered. KATE and MAGGIE venture downstairs to help MRS. WELLES with lunch, if they can, as the other two get dressed.

INT KITCHEN KATE and MAGGIE enter. MRS. WELLES faces them and smiles.

MRS. WELLES

I'm so glad to see you. Could one of you stir the Sloppy Joe while I go get dressed?

She leaves a spoon by the pan and leaves. MAGGIE moves over to the pan and KATE begins to look for paper plates and silverware.

MAGGIE

Good God! Return of the Stepford mom.

KATE

Opening drawers in her pursuit.

No kidding. Menopausal mood swings. We should ask Shelly about that. Maybe she could take some estrogen or something.

MAGGIE

Looking into the pan as she stirs lunch.

Uh, Kate. Could you come here a sec?



A CLOSE UP of the two of them from behind as they look into the pan. MAGGIE lifts the lid, pulls out the spoon which just has browned ground beef on it., and they look at each other, then quickly close the lid. MRS. WELLES returns. She moves to the stove, KATE and MAGGIE step back, and she stirs the beef.

MRS. WELLES

Ready!

KATE and MAGGIE stare at each other and try to decide who should talk. KATE speaks up.

KATE

Isn't there supposed to be some kind of, I don't know, tomato sauce, in it, Mrs. Welles?

MRS. WELLES glares at her, walks over to the refrigerator and pull out a bottle of ketchup. She slams it on the counter and leaves the kitchen. MICHELLE and LORI then come into the kitchen. KATE and MAGGIE are opened-mouthed and near laughter.

MAGGIE

To MICHELLE and LORI

Come and get it!

LORI

Good, I'm starving. Shel?

MICHELLE

I could eat, I guess.  
What's for lunch?

KATE

Laughing

Sloppy Joes.

LORI looks into the pan and turns to MAGGIE.

LORI

There's no sauce!

KATE hands her the ketchup and a bun. LORI pours the ketchup on the bun and piles the beef onto it, then adds more ketchup to keep it from falling off the bun. MICHELLE follows her. MAGGIE and KATE, still in shock, try to do the same. Each of them stands by the counter and attempts to eat the sandwich.

MICHELLE

Are we going to leave soon? I can't stand this too much longer.

MAGGIE

Shut up and eat your Crumbly Joe.

EXT LORI and MICHELLE are in the back of the Escort. KATE and MAGGIE are slamming their doors and waving goodbye to MRS. and MR. WELLES, from their POV. As they pull onto the street they all give a sigh of relief and LORI resumes play of the "street name" game. They continue driving for sometime after they reach the interstate, MICHELLE trying to read a magazine, KATE finding a station, MAGGIE singing along and LORI staring out the window. Finally, she speaks.

LORI

In CLOSE UP ,matter of factly.

I don't think I'll make a very good lawyer.

KATE looks at MAGGIE then turns around to LORI. MAGGIE spies her from the rearview mirror

MICHELLE

Turning to her, confused. Both of them are now in a MEDIUM SHOT from the front seat.

Why not?

LORI

Well, I know I'm dedicated enough. And hard work doesn't scare me. I just don't know if I'm logical enough.

MAGGIE

Talking to her in the rearview mirror.

Then why are you going to law school?

MICHELLE

Ignoring MAGGIE.

Listen, Lor, if you weren't logical would you *doubt* that you were logical? Or wouldn't you just assume you were logical and not worry about it.

She smiles at her perceived revelation.

LORI

In CLOSE UP as she turns to MICHELLE then back out the window.

I just wonder if I'm cut out for this, that's all. Don't you ever feel that way?

MICHELLE

Laughing.

Me? Never.

MAGGIE smiles at her in the rearview mirror.

KATE

In CLOSE UP, shaking her head in disagreement with LORI.

No...I don't.

MAGGIE

A MEDIUM SHOT of both of them, as she stares at KATE in disbelief.

You never wonder if you're doing the right thing.

KATE shakes her head "no" at her.

Bullshit!

KATE

What?

MAGGIE

Bullshit. That's bullshit.

KATE

Growing indignant.

That's it. Lori, empty that Ding Dong Box.

There is the rustle of cardboard and the foil of the remaining cakes. LORI hands some to MICHELLE, who opens one and eats it. LORI then hands the empty box to KATE.

This

She holds up the box.

is our cuss box. If we're all going to be

adults, we should start speaking like it and cut out the filth.

MAGGIE

Munching on a Ding Dong LORI has handed her.

Damn straight.

KATE

That's a quarter.

MICHELLE

Leaning forward.

What about shit?

KATE

A quarter. "Fuck" will be fifty cents.

MAGGIE

So you owe the box fifty cents?

KATE

No, I was explaining. Explanations and quotes are free.

MAGGIE

Couldn't I just say I was quoting someone?

KATE

No...I know you.

MAGGIE

Fine. But I still say you get scared sometimes.

KATE

Why should I? I know what I'm doing, where I'm going. Apprehension wouldn't do me any good.

MICHELLE

Leans forward into a MEDIUM SHOT with KATE and MAGGIE.

That's a good outlook, Kate. I know about these things.

MAGGIE

What, is her inner child happy?

MICHELLE

Hey, don't knock it. It works for some people.

MAGGIE

It's bullshit.

She look at KATE who shakes the still empty box.

I didn't get the Barbie townhouse when I was six, so I'm scarred for life. Get over it!

LORI

Who has remained quiet, joins the fracas.

Actually, Maggie, therapy using the inner child has been quite successful for a lot of people. It's only through finding a person's worst experience, and remedying that, that any healing can begin. So for you to dismiss it as a form of childish wish fulfillment or thwarted desire misses the point entirely.

MAGGIE

Defense rests, counselor?

KATE

Looking at MAGGIE.

Slick move, Banks.

MAGGIE

Thank you, Davis.

LORI smiles and eases back into her seat.

EXT The Escort continues down a dusty highway, moving rapidly from Midwest to Western skies. The late afternoon sun is still high as they move into it.

MAGGIE

Yecch! Is anyone else choking on dust or is it just me?

LORI

It's just you!

A beat.

Seriously, I think I'm breathing dust. And I need some food. That Crumbly Joe and those four million Ding Dongs just did not work. I feel sick now.